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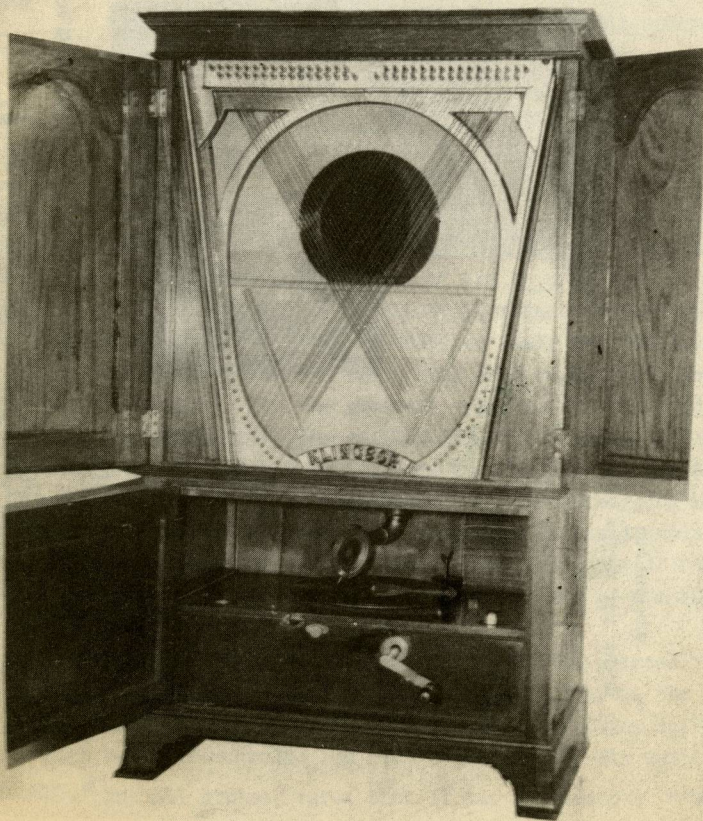


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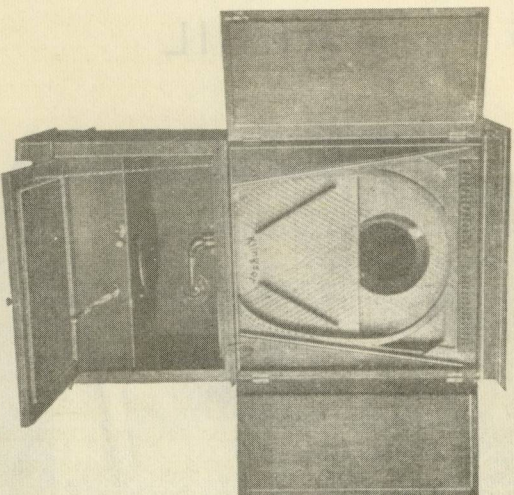
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October 1909

The London Career of Fernando de Lucia

by M.E.Henstock

From the many records of singers from the so-called Golden Age one may select examples to illustrate perfection in each of the many facets of singing. Innocent of intention to provoke, my purely personal choice would include Kurz's trill, Battistini's messia di voce, Caruso's massive tone, Plancon's legato, McCormack's breath control, etc: such singers spring to mind principally through their obvious merits, but also because each recorded prolifically enough to spare us the risk of passing judgement on the evidence of a single example of their work. The singling out of a particular characteristic of each artist does not, of course, imply limited abilities, for most of the qualities selected can, in a less highly developed form, be found in the records of the other singers. It is, however, recognised that, of this group, only Battistini represents the bel canto tradition of the nineteenth century and possibly earlier. His messia di voce, selected as an outstanding feature of his singing largely because of the frequency and almost contemptuous ease with which he surmounted this formidable technical hurdle, is only one aspect of his mastery of his vocal mechanism, and the fluent assurance of his delivery, his splendid phrasing and remarkable agility are well known.

Possibly the only male singer whose recorded legacy qualifies him to be ranked with Battistini as a true exponent of bel canto in all its aspects is Fernando de Lucia. To select for this singer an outstanding and characteristic quality presents certain difficulties since in him were many desirable attributes very highly developed: perhaps technically, one should select agility or mezza voce. But, above all, what pervades De Lucia's output is individuality, and this now falls strangely upon ears long disciplined by the Toscaninis of this world. In the bygone heyday of the da capo aria it was almost mandatory that the repeated sections be elaborately ornamented: singers were often judged and applauded largely according to the difficulty of their own embellishments to the written vocal line, and to the manner in which they were negotiated. Doubtless many such ornaments were pre-rehearsed,¹ but the greatest applause was reserved for the singer who managed to convince his audience of the spontaneity of his latest creation.

The science of recording came too late to preserve any but the last flickers of this now vanished style: few were the artists too uncompromising to let it die or too well established to bow to what they no doubt considered a fashionable whim for the verismo opera. Little enough of it was captured on wax, and a significant proportion of what remains lies in the records of De Lucia. He is thus a figure of considerable historical and musical significance.

Born in Naples on 11th, October, 1860^{2,3}, De Lucia entered the Conservatorio di San Pietro a Majella, Naples, to study initially not singing, but the bassoon and the double bass. His studies were interrupted by a period of military service, but he returned to study voice with Beniamino Carelli and with Lombardi.^{2,4} His debut is variously given as 1883³ or 1885,² but all sources agree that it was as Gounod's Faust at the San Carlo,

Naples, that the young tenor faced his first operatic audience. Success was sufficient for the tenor's subsequent engagement at Bologna, as Alfredo, and Florence as Don Jose. He later appeared in Lisbon³, Buenos Aires, Montevideo², and Madrid, where in the spring season of 1887 at the Teatro Reale, he was engaged by Sir Augustus Harris and Hermann Klein, who described him as a "new light tenor", to appear in the former's experimental season at Drury Lane. His reputation must have been growing rapidly, for by the time of his arrival in London in June he was being billed⁶ there as "Leading primo tenore leggiero of the Teatro Reale, Madrid": one wonders whether Gayarre, across the road at Covent Garden, saw this description. The first London season included the roles of Alfredo⁷, Don Ottavio⁸, and Almaviva⁹, and only in the last did the critic of 'The Times' find much on which to lavish words, describing a ". . . very indifferent performance of the opening scenes in Signor de Lucia, a more than indifferent Almaviva, sang the 'serenade' in a truly detestable manner . . ." going on to compliment the Rosina, Sigrid and Arnoldson.

It may well be that De Lucia's artistry and technique were not, at this early stage in his career, what they were by 1903, when he made his first records, but one suspects that one reason for his lukewarm reception by London audiences was that 1887 saw the return of the baritones Jan di Reschi as the tenor Jean de Reszke, singing at Drury Lane too. One may also muse that, in what we must accept as the operatic treasure house of three simultaneous London seasons - the De Reszkes, Fabbri, Battistini, Patti, Lehmann, Gayarre, Albani, Scalchi, etc - the lustre of a largely unknown tenor remained unnoticed.

The steadily increasing reputation of the tenor is reflected in his being asked to create the role of Fritz Kobus to the Suzel of Emma Calvé in the world premiere of Mascagni's "L'Amico Fritz" on 31st. October, 1891 in Rome². He appeared in 1892 at Covent Garden where he sang Turiddu and Fritz, both opposite Calvé: in the latter, "The Times" confined itself to remarking ". . . voice is not of very agreeable quality, but he at least sings in tune and with a good deal of effect".¹⁰ George Bernard Shaw was rather less benign¹¹: "Signor de Lucia succeeds Valero and Lubert as artificial tenor in ordinary to the establishment. His thin strident forte is in tune and does not tremble beyond endurance: and his mezza voce, though monotonous and inexpressive, is pretty as prettiness goes in the artificial school." As Turiddu he was compared unfavourably with Vignea¹², but the consensus was that he had markedly improved since 1887.

The London season of 1893 presented the tenor in four roles: a fifth, Boito's "Faust" was billed for 16th. June¹³ but did not, apparently, take place. Nadir¹⁴, Giorgio¹⁵ ("I Rantzau") and Fritz created little attention other than criticism of De Lucia's tremolo in the first and approved of his energy in the second, of which he was the original creator. But his Canio, London's first, made history, and the living legend he made of the role was not seriously eroded even by the later successes of Caruso in the part. Let the correspondent of "The Times" take up the story of 19th. May, 1893¹⁶: ". . . Signor de Lucia acts with consummate skill and puts intense pathos onto the beautiful soliloquy at the end of the first act . . . The composer and the performers (Ancona and Melba sang the other principal parts) were called before the curtain many times at this point, and, as a matter of course, at the close. But here the chief applause

was for Signor de Lucia and it was well bestowed. The very qualities which to some extent mar his efforts in music of a purely lyrical kind are turned to the best account here, and the performer are exactly suited to each other." Herman Klein wrote¹⁷, "De Lucia, despite his tremolo, was just the kind of passionate tenor for the role of Canio," and P.G. Hurst¹⁸, "De Lucia's delicate art was seen at its best and most perfect. In his big scenes he did not rage and storm, being more overcome with grief; his singing never lost its silvery quality or the perfect melodic line . . . After witnessing a long cavalcade of Canios I find that De Lucia's stands supreme for the unforced pathos of his acting, and the sheer beauty of his singing." This aspect of the performance was also vividly described by Klein⁵. Here, at one stroke, he created for himself the reputation of verismo tenor par excellence, the reputation that was to dictate his London repertoire until his last performances there.

The Metropolitan heard the tenor as Don Giovanni, Turiddu, Il Duce di Mantova, Canio, Faust, Fritz, Alfredo, and Alaviva in the 1893-4 season¹⁹ but, since he never reappeared there, one may assume that he failed to win a share of the acclaim currently being heaped on the De Reszkes. He returned to Covent Garden in 1894 to have his singing described²⁰ as "wonderfully improved since last year" and even the astringent Shaw waxing enthusiastic¹¹ about his acting in "I Pagliacci"; he sang also in "Rigoletto"^{11, 21}, "Faust"²⁰, and "Cavalleria Rusticana"²², but the reviews clearly indicated where the critics considered his merits to lie.

We may assume that foreign audiences were more catholic in the choice of opera in which they would applaud the tenor for De Lucia returned in 1895 with seven rôles, four of which he had not sung previously in London. His appearances in Falstaff²³, Fra Diavolo and Rigoletto²⁵ were adequate, and in Mefistofele²⁶ ". . . his vocalisation was almost entirely free from the peculiarities usually indulged in by him." One has the uncomfortable feeling that the real point of the season was the "final" appearance of Patti, commencing on 11th June, 12, 27.

On 25th March, 1893, De Lucia sang in the world premiere of Mascagni's latest effort to emulate the immensely successful "Cavalleria Rusticana", but "Silvano", mounted at La Scala, was a virtual failure; the association with Mascagni subsequently continued with "Iris" in Rome on 22nd November, 1893.

After an undistinguished London season of 1896¹² the tenor did not reappear there until 1899, when he sang the first Rodolpho at Covent Garden to the Mimi of Melba, by whom he was overshadowed. One is not quite sure whether the description²⁸ ". . . delicious duet in the dark with Rudolpho (sic) was, vocally, the most satisfactory, and its conclusion, one of the prettiest ever invented, was a marvel of pure singing," covers also De Lucia's contribution: unequivocal approval was, however, given to the acting of the four students De Lucia, Ancona, Glibert, and Journet. The by now almost inevitable Pagliacci received the usual applause, and that was De Lucia's season.

The 1900 season included the tenor in "I Paliacci"²⁹, "La Bohème"³⁰, the then-new "Tosca"³¹, and two operas that he had not sung in London since 1887, "Il Barbiere"^{11, 32}, and "Don Giovanni"³³, and here we notice real recognition in London of his abilities as a tenore di grazia. For example, in "Il Barbiere", he was described as ". . . a capital Alaviva, in spite of the fact that the somewhat strident quality of the voice suits the modern

Italian music far better than it does of the period of the bel canto." It was, however, "Tosca" that claimed the season's honours, and the soprano Ternina who claimed the largest share: De Lucia was "... a very earnest lover, though he rather spares his listeners the terrors of the torture chamber". Hurst¹⁸ remarked that "... special notice may be taken that in his soliloquy on the strange harmony of contrasts he addressed his remarks to the picture he was painting, and, while painting it, sang in a quiet reflective way in which the scene requires. Can any other tenor be recalled who has the courage to do this and avoid the urge to turn his back on his work and address the audience?"

De Lucia's last appearances in London were during a season organised by Henry Russell at the Waldorf Theatre. In "L'Amico Fritz" he was accused³⁴ of having "imbibed something of the Bayreuth system of today", but no reservations were made about "I Pagliacci", which had a success amply described elsewhere^{18, 35}. And a final description of his Almaviva as "excellent" and with a great success in "Ecco ridente".

In 1910 the tenor, while continuing his career, especially in the concert hall, became professor of singing in Naples. He appeared in opera until the time of Italy's entering the war, and sang at the funeral of his fellow Neapolitan, Caruso, in 1921. Around 1918 he formed the Phonotype recording company and for it made over two hundred records, embracing most of his operatic repertoire, including "Rigoletto" and "Il Barbiere" complete. He died on 21st, February, 1925.³

From the foregoing contemporary criticisms it is apparent that De Lucia's fame rested, in England, upon his performances in the verismo operas; opinions of his abilities in the older repertoire varied between "detestable" and "capital" - with reservations. As Emma Calvé complained that the public wanted her only as Carmen, so could De Lucia with equal truth have claimed that London audiences appreciated only his Canio. Acquaintance with his recorded legacy would, however, give quite a different impression of his talents: it is extremely doubtful whether any recorded performances surpass many of his renderings of Rossini and Donizetti, which are quite unlike those of any other tenor on record. His decorations to the melodic line are truly amazing in their speed, delicacy and accuracy, and his tonal colouring is ravishingly beautiful, especially in his earlier recordings. Comparison of his version of a Rossini aria with that printed in the score will generally reveal considerable differences. It is, of course, only during this century that we have grown to regard the score as sacrosanct, and there can be no doubt that Rossini expected embellishments even if he could not bring himself to approve of them. De Lucia's vocal control is almost unparalleled and this, with his prodigious output of records, makes him unique as an example of an earlier epoch of singing. It has been well said that he is a master of light and shade.³⁶ The mezza voce and the diminuendo characterise his singing; it is a revelation to hear how their judicious use can transform that rather dull aria "Salve! dimora" into something of beauty and interest. The oft-despised head voice can, when used with the skill displayed by De Lucia in, for example, the duets with Huguet from "Faust" and "I Pescatori di Perle", sound wonderfully tender. The sole requirement for the listener to enjoy the records as much as the tenor obviously enjoys his own vocal prowess, is that he shall not take the score too

seriously. On the debit side, some ugly sounds are sometimes emitted, notably the nasal tone produced on certain vowels, and also some curious tempi; the most disconcerting feature to the uninitiated is likely to be the vibrato, which, although rapid and delicate, is certainly excessive by modern standards.

Why, then, was this tenor virtually ignored in the bel canto repertoire? The vibrato was constantly remarked upon, but Bonci, whose voice to my ear trembles equally noticeably and has also a tendency occasionally to go off the note, was accepted without criticism. The obvious answer is that there were available other tenors who were considered his superior in these roles; he was, in fact, considered as little more than competent. The unquestioned fact that he is one of the two finest exponents of bel canto on record leads to the inevitable conclusion that standards of pure singing have fallen since the turn of the century.

De Lucia recorded for the Gramophone and Typewriter Co., for Fonotipia, and for Phonotype, a company that he founded in Naples around 1918; for these companies he made more than three hundred records³⁷ covering most of his repertoire. A brief survey can thus describe only a small fraction of his output, even if copies of all his records were available to this reviewer, and further comments are available elsewhere^{36, 37}.

The first group of G & T records, made in Milan in 1903³⁸, contains songs and some truncated operatic arias including a highly decorated verse of "Se il mio nome", (52427) and a similarly abbreviated "La Donna e mobile" (52411) in which De Lucia, accompanied by what this writer feels must surely be the world's worst pianist, employs some delicate touches to rejuvenate this most hackneyed of tunes, so often used as a vehicle for full-throated appeals to the gallery. The 1904 "Ecco ridente" (52078), surely one of his very finest recordings, shows to advantage the beauty of tone, captured even by the early recordings, that is apparent in his early sessions: the ornaments, which start on the second syllable of the first 'aurora' and continues throughout, are lovingly shaped and flawlessly executed; the allegro section is breath-taking in its speed and accuracy. Of his other Barber excerpts, the 'Numero quindici' with Pini-Corsi is outstanding for the light touch displayed in the section beginning 'Ah, che d'amore . . .' and for the ensuing display of coloratura. The duets with Huguet display the oddly feminine sound that the tenor sometimes produced, and show also his consideration for his partner; in marked contrast with other recorded duets featuring singers of differing fame, the great tenor at no time overpowers the soprano by sheer volume. De Lucia was by no means lacking in power; one of the problems of playing his records involves suitable adjustment of the volume control to permit appraisal of the minute, silvery thread of his diminuendo without, a moment later, having one's ears assailed by a ringing fortissimo of tremendous vigour.

Later recordings for G & T included Neapolitan songs as well as operatic arias. 'Nun me guardate' shows the tenor spinning out his phrases, airing some typical Neapolitan turns and ending, just when the ear is preparing for a crashing finale, with a delightful pianissimo. The other side of DA 333 is in very different mood; 'Oili, Oili' rollicks along, with the tenor and male chorus in the highest of spirits and thoroughly enjoying themselves.

The Fonotipias comprised a single series of thirty Neapolitan songs and were

made in 1910-12. They are said³⁷ to show a darker timbre than do the G & T records but, possessing no originals, I can pass no opinions on them. This seems to be a suitable point at which to comment that far too few long playing transcriptions give details of their original material: this is of particular importance when one deals with an artist who made as many records as did De Lucia, of whom I possess six long playing records, not one of which gives such information. Although it is sometimes quite obvious which recording is being used, the reverse is too often the case. ASCO 105 contains a good selection of Neapolitan songs but no indication of their source: 'Lu Cardillo', for example, was recorded for Fonotipia and at least once for Phonotype. One should not need to be a pundit before one can find out exactly what is on the record - but why make it difficult, even for them? - and I do not accept the argument that only a pundit would want to know.

The bulk of the tenor's recordings were for Phonotype and number, at a conservative estimate, over two hundred, including "Rigoletto" and "Il Barbiere" complete. Made from about 1917 onwards they appear, from transcriptions in my possession, to be very well recorded. The voice has lost some of its tonal beauty and occasionally sounds thin on the top notes, but the melting mezza voce is still much in evidence. The vocal control, on the other hand, shows no diminution but rather the reverse, in that the improvisations are sometimes more intricate than those of his 1903-4 series. The principal evidence of reduced powers is that items are sometimes transposed. There is also some deterioration in artistic taste: whereas most of his earlier ornamentation is, to my ear, decidedly attractive, the Phonotype of 'Il Sogro' contains a tasteless and ugly ending, and 'Adina credimi' what sounds suspiciously like one of Gigli's sobs. There is also, one suspects, a tendency to place the less important singers farthest from the horn, resulting in complete inaudibility of the soprano De Angelis, in parts of the otherwise wonderful 'Ah! Selika' (L'Africana) and in 'Vieni fra queste braccia'; is this one wonders, the reason for the very shrill tone of De Angelis, a tone that does not seem to respond to remedial speed changes.

Space permits me the selection of only a few of the Phonotypes that, in transcription, are worthy of note. 'Ecco ridetel' is more highly decorated than is the version mentioned earlier, with allegro sung at even more breakneck speed. The duet from "L'Africana" contains some rapid turns and tasteful use of the half-voice, and the Harlequin's serenade an extraordinary graceful re-entry into the melody to commence the second verse. As an example of how the tenor treated less florid music one might select the 'Sicilliana', on which is the indelible stamp of the nineteenth century, a hallmark that De Lucia retained until the end; note the rapid, flickering, almost casual figurations he inserts in the long-drawn, sensuous phrases.

But, after all the operatic recordings, I find myself returning to the first record that he ever made, Tosti's 'Ideale' (52401), of which only the second verse is given. The way in which he caresses 'torna' and embellishes the second syllable of the final 'aurora' haunt the memory.

Whatever may be said for or against De Lucia, few lovers of Opera and singing can remain indifferent to him. Such an attitude is made impossible by his unconcealed delight in his mastery of the voice production and by the use made of it. Collectors

tend to have many of his records or none at all, but my experience is that even the most puritan collector tends to succumb, sooner or later, to the exuberance of the man who has been called the last singer of the rococo age.³⁶

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FERNANDO DE LUCIA

I am collecting material for a biography of this singer and would be most grateful for any information that readers may be able to supply concerning dates of operatic appearances outside England, and concert activities anywhere, together with details of colleagues, newspapers reporting the event, etc.

I am particularly anxious to trace friends and members of his family, who might be willing to provide me with personal reminiscences or to loan to me relevant correspondence, photographs, opera or concert programmes, and newspapers, cuttings, scrapbooks and diaries. Readers of the article on De Lucia in this issue will have noted the complete absence of information on his personality, family life, upbringing, etc.; literally anything of personal interest will be of value in building up a background to his operatic and recording activities.

Finally, since it is evident that published discographies of De Lucia are now seen to be incomplete, I would much appreciate the co-operation of readers in using the enclosed form to give me the fullest details of records in their possession. The greatest care will be taken with any material loaned to me, and nothing will be published without permission. M.E. HENSTOCK. [REDACTED] BRAMCOTE, NOTTINGHAM.

telephone [REDACTED]

OPERA ON WAX AMBEROLS

by George Frow

The operatic 4-minute Edison wax Amberol cylinders come to light far less often in this country than the Blue Amberols, or the 2-minute 1906 series of Edison; in fact most of the Edison operatic cylinders enjoyed no great success as one has only to read between the lines of the Edison periodicals of that time. Those who enjoyed opera on records were well catered for by the disc manufacturers.

The Amberol operatic cylinders were first announced in this country in December, 1909, and the last issues made in April 1911. With regular withdrawals and not outstanding sales they are naturally not over-numerous, and their extreme fragility has been a further hazard. In their original packing, they would be found in a smart maroon box, with gilt trade-mark across the side of the box; the cylinders themselves, in particular the early ones, have the title on the end in blue print, but as this may have proved hard to read, they seem later to have been issued in yellow or white.

The operatic Amberols were first numbered B.150 to B.197 (with several omissions in later numbers) and in June 1910 (U.K.) the B numbering was discontinued and the series re-numbered in three blocks 30000 - 30056, 35000 - 35021, and 40000 - 40044, making a total issue of 121.

Most of the artists were connected with the Manhattan Opera House, which had been opened by Oscar Hammerstein at the end of 1906 to show competition to the Metropolitan. A list of artists shows varying qualities of talent - Riccardo Martin, Constantino, Agostinelli, Duclos, Nucelly, Dubois, Lucenti, Ferrabini, Caronna, Soomer, Huberdeau, Cilla, Rappold, Giorgini, Caleffi, Carlo Albani, Hensel, Arral, Bernhardt, Kurz, Galvany, Labia, Slezak, Sylva, Melis, Delna, Jörn, Polese and Bori.

When the more durable Blue Amberol cylinders were announced in October, 1912, a number of the old Amberol operatic series were included among the 28000 Concert series and pressed in the new material, together with some fresh issues, and these are to be found more commonly than the earlier operatic wax Amberol cylinders.

Not all of the wax Amberols were re-issued, however, and these are the items for which the collector should keep a watch. For instance, of Kurz's four wax Amberols, one, the 'Styrienne de Mignon' was never issued as a Blue, and it is worth seeking for its effortless trill.

The five Blue Amberols by Bonci appeared in October 1913, and were numbered 29001-5. These were direct recordings and not re-pressings of earlier Amberols, but the remaining 72 cylinders of this 29000 were the Royal Purple Concert and Opera series, and were dubbed from Edison Diamond Discs at a later date.

It is hoped that one of our Members with a comprehensive collection of wax Amberols will enlarge on this article, and that perhaps we can have contributions about vocal and operatic cylinders on other makes than Edison.

* * * * *

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O B I T U A R Y

DENNIS CARTER of Swaffham, Norfolk.

Born of London parents Dennis moved to Swaffham in his youth, a keen model maker from those early days whose interests and skill developed over the years.

Brother George recalls their early antics when as youths they would make wax recordings on home made apparatus. His interests over the years took him through the range of Edison, electric amplification, 78's to L.P.'s and his self built equipment and music was enjoyed and appreciated with much enthusiasm by Nancy and their children.

Dennis had corresponded over the years with many collectors in various parts of the world, making many pleasant exchanges, sales, and purchases and could always find time to delve into his "stores" to accommodate a collector. Without a doubt he has contributed to our hobby and to the happiness of many by his generosity, enthusiasm, freely given advice and knowledge and his engineering skill transformed many a 'wobbler' machine to a "sweet runner", he was a perfectionist in this field.

I cannot claim to have been a life time's friend of Dennis for we met only some six years ago when I sought a "doctor" for my purchase of a rusty 'Standard', but living in close proximity our friendship grew with the common bond of collecting. I never failed to learn something about our hobby when my wife and I visited "Ashdene" their home, and being a fine host he would always delight us by having a few Blues which he thought we should like to hear at the ready for our musical sessions.

Nancy and Dennis had visited the London meetings and had received many visitors at their home, there was always a cordial welcome and much to see and to talk about.

Dennis had not been well since towards the end of last year, he officially retired from work at Christmas and since then had been into both Kings Lynn and Swaffham hospitals, returning home only to go into hospital again more recently during which time he underwent an operation. Dennis passed away on Sunday 23rd April.

Our sympathy goes out to Nancy, their two sons and daughters and eleven grandchildren, who will miss him so very much. It is hard yet to realise that we shall no longer tinker

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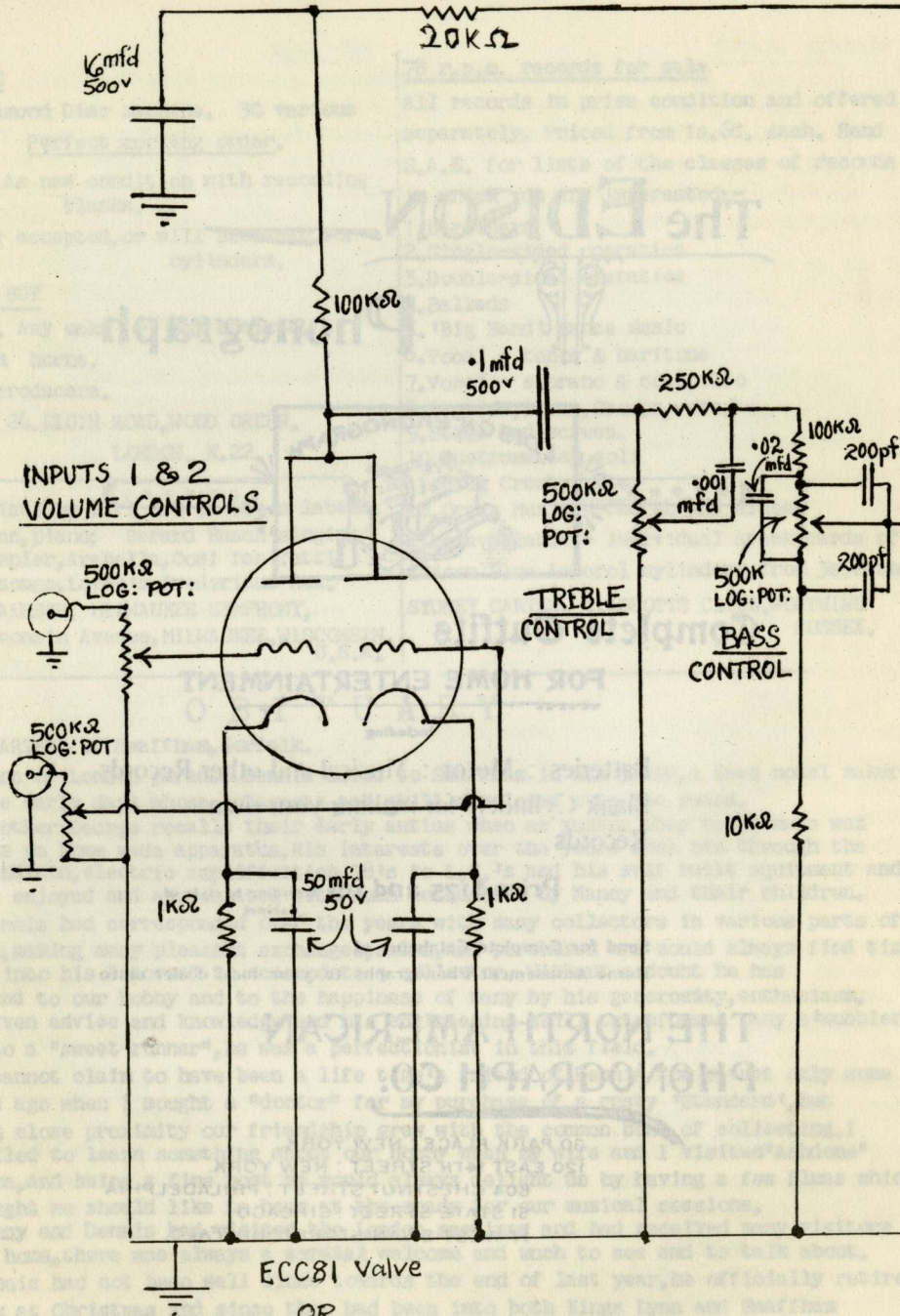
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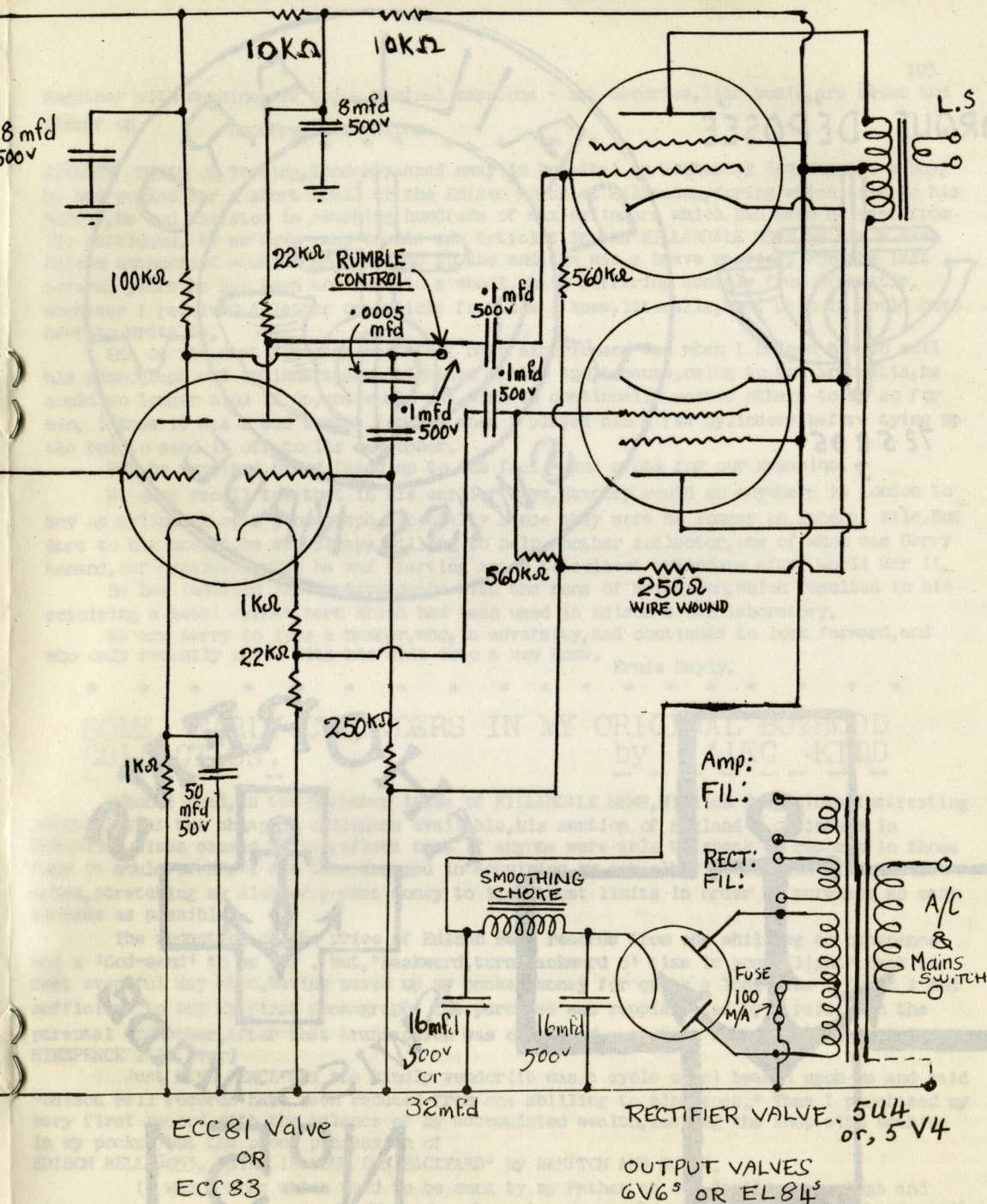
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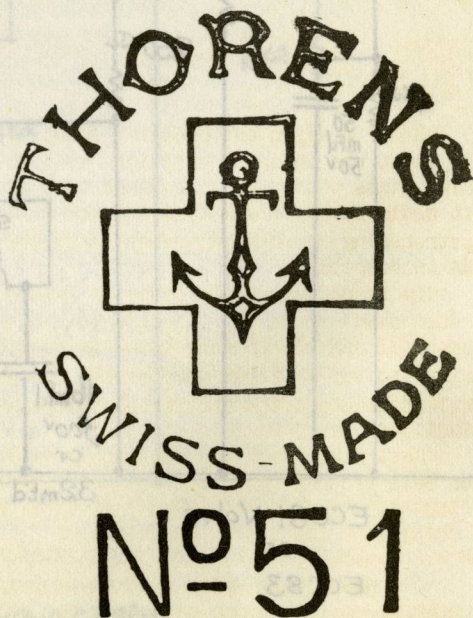
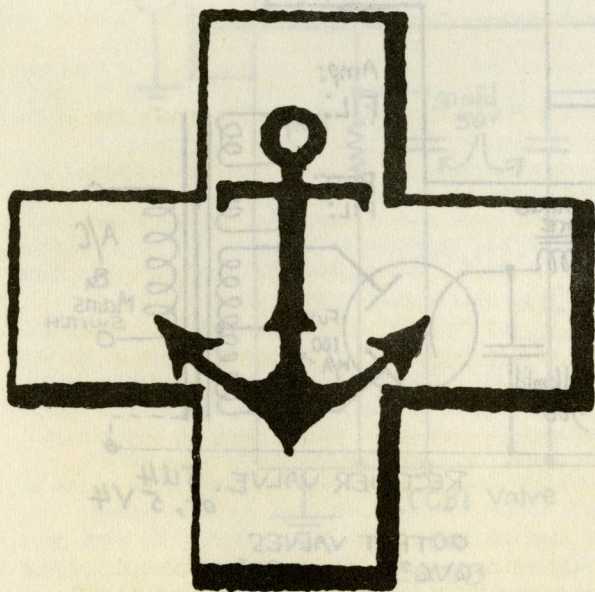
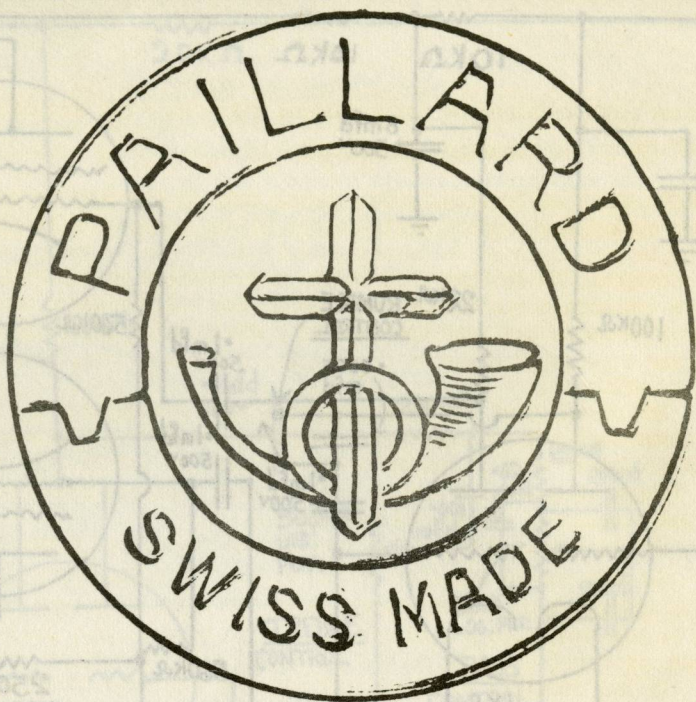
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together with machines or enjoy musical sessions - but memories, like music, are sweet and linger on.

Geoffrey Easterling

* * * * *

STANLEY BREAM of Tooting, London, passed away in hospital on Wednesday 3rd. May. As a boy, he had worked for a short spell at the Edison works at Willesden, during which time, to his horror, he had assisted in smashing hundreds of wax cylinders which had been deleted from the catalogue. As we have read in his own articles in the HILLANDALE NEWS he was a keen Edison enthusiast - which he remained to the end. He was a brave warrior. For the last several years he has been confined to a wheel chair suffering acutely from arthritis. Whenever I received a letter or article from him I knew, literally, what pain it would have been to write it.

One of the most touching moments I have experienced was when I helped him to sell his phonograph and cylinders, some eighteen months ago, because, owing to the arthritis, he could no longer wind it up, and would not wish to continually pester others to do so for him. I know it was a sad moment for him when I played him a few cylinders before tying up the box to send it off to its new owner.

But he remained proud, faced up to the fact - and wrote for our magazine.

We must recall too, that in his earlier days, Stanley would go anywhere in London to buy up cylinders or a phonograph, especially since they were no longer on general sale. But more to his credit, he was always willing to help another collector, one of whom was Gerry Annand, our President, when he was starting again to collect cylinders after World War II.

He had indulged in correspondence with the sons of Mr. Edison, which resulted in his acquiring a metal cygnet horn which had been used in Edison's own laboratory.

We are sorry to lose a Member, who, in adversity, had continued to look forward, and who only recently moved with his wife into a new home.

Ernie Bayly.

* * * * *

SOME EARLY CYLINDERS IN MY ORIGINAL BOYHOOD COLLECTION. by ALEC KIDD

When I read, in the December issue of HILLANDALE NEWS, William Tregoning's interesting article, about the cheapest cylinders available, his mention of England's cylinders in Edwardian times caused me to reflect that if anyone were able to speak of records in those days it would be ME. I was then engaged in acquiring my schoolboy collection of 2-minute waxes, stretching my slender pocket money to its utmost limits in order to purchase as many records as possible.

The reduction of the price of Edison Bell records from one shilling to ninepence was a 'God-send' to me . . . but, "Backward, turn backward o' time in your flight", back to that eventful day when, having saved up my pocket money for quite a long time I found I had sufficient to buy my first phonograph. The purchase was supplemented by a raid upon the parental exchequer. After that transaction was completed a certain schoolboy had JUST NINEPENCE left over!

Just NINE PENCE and the kindly vendor (it was a cycle shop) beamed upon me and said "Edison Bell records have been reduced from one shilling to ninepence." Thus I purchased my very first record with the balance of my accumulated wealth, leaving the shop with nothing in my pocket but the proud possession of EDISON BELL 6053. "STAY IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD" by HAMPTON AND SMITH.

It was a song which used to be sung by my Father at our family gatherings and very familiar to the young schoolboy who gloated rapturously as he listened to it over and over again. Just think of it. A household plagued and virtually held to ransom by a

youngster playing ONE CYLINDER over and over again. Such a state of affairs could not be allowed to continue, so the following day, my dear old dad returned from the office with a box of twelve Edison Bell records to make some variation in the monotony of my sound reproduction.

The original "First Record" is still in my possession and has a prominent place on the shelves in my Phonograph Room and by virtue of its 'seniority' take precedence over the other 2000 odd!

Alas! Of the other 12 only two have evaded the ravages of time. Two comic songs by HARRY BLUFF - 5894 'Warmer Giles' and 6666 'Husbands'. These two records are probably two of the best of the hundreds recorded by this hard-working official of the Edison Bell Company.

As fast as I could obtain the necessary pocket money more records were enthusiastically added to my collection. I bought some Edisons and would have bought more if I could have afforded a whole shilling, but the lure of that threepence cheaper fastened me then to the Edison Bell issues.

(to be continued)

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THANK YOU, E.M.I. Ltd

We are very grateful to E.M.I. Ltd for the excellent notice which has been included in the current issue of EMINES. Not satisfied with just a mention, an extremely "eye-catching" design has been prepared, giving full details of our Exhibition to be held in August.

* * * * *

C O N G R A T U L A T I O N S

to our contemporary magazine

"THE RECORD COLLECTOR"

and its Editor, JAMES DENNIS on reaching its
21 st. Anniversary.

This has been achieved by the maintenance of an excellent standard dealing with the world of vocal recordings of opera.

* * * * *

The next issue of THE HILLDALE NEWS will be delayed until towards the end of June in order to include the latest and fullest details of the Exhibition and also some very interesting material which has come to hand in only the last few days, and which will need extra time to prepare. We hope that we shall have the pleasure of meeting you at our Exhibition in the Gresham Hall, Gresham Street, London, E.C. between 31st. July and 11th. August. Any Member willing to act as a Steward, even if only a short period, is requested to tell Ernie Bayly as soon as possible. In connection with the Exhibition, thanks to the assistance of Herr Schenker we had on loan from both the Paillard and Thorens Companies much valuable material & catalogues. From this we recognised gramophones and phonographs which were also on sale in England bearing the 'stencil' of various mail-order houses. Some of this interesting material is already partially prepared for sale to Members shortly. Other material has been photographed and will be shown at the Exhibition.

THE SOCIETY PLAYBACK AMPLIFIER

by Peter Lewis

In this issue we show the wiring circuit of the amplifier used at our meetings at 'The Horse & Groom' to play-back recordings acoustically. No doubt 'master-minds' may be raised in apprehension - but suffice it to be that this particular circuit has no undue 'technical terrors' for the amateur dabbler who would like to build his own re-play unit.

Simplicity was, and is its aim: for anyone who does a little radio work for himself can find most of the parts to assemble this little unit. Also, the circuit can be modified if required, to your own needs. As for the input stage, especially where a magnetic pickup is used, an input transformer may be required.

The design is intended to suit the frequency range of cylinders and early discs although the occasional L.P. should give reasonable account of itself. The valves used have many equivalents which will directly replace without circuit modifications.

Loudspeakers are very difficult to recommend as the preference of quality accepted by the individual is of a very personal nature, but, providing the speaker matches, whether it be a 15 ohm or 3 ohm type, and is housed in a generously sized cabinet (box), you should obtain satisfactory results.

Two inputs are provided so that both disc and phonograph connections may be left in position without the need ^{to} change from one to the other. There will be no detrimental effects, as both inputs are totally individual in operation, having separate volume controls.

A form of 'rumble filter' is included, and is of necessity a form of 'extreme bass cut' which should be used only when the familiar 'thump, thump' from a distorted cylinder or disc arises and proves unpleasant. It can also be used when there is a really persistent 'rumble' through a cylinder or disc. I would suggest that there should be no use for this control on electrical recordings for it should be desirable only in the above difficulties.

The volume with a ten-inch speaker is adequate for a very large room - as we find at the 'Horse & Groom' - with gain in hand for the occasional low - level recording. Suggested layout of the controls:-

Volume	Volume	Rumble	Treble	Bass	Mains	Amplifier on/off
one	two				switch	indicator lamp.

(Editor's Note: Since we have used amplifier of Peter's design we have heard excellent results. Thank you Peter, put a golden feather in your cap!)

* * * * *

PREMIER CONGRES MONDIAL DES PHONOTHEQUES

This conference will be held in Paris 5th to 12th June and should prove very interesting to private collectors as well as those supervising record-libraries or record-museums. Details are available from La Phonothèque Nationale, 19, Rue des Bernadins, Paris. 5.

CONGRATULATIONS TO Monsieur ROGER DECOLLOGNE

Our Society offers its congratulations to Monsieur Decollogne, Director of the Phonothèque Nationale, whom we hear has been named 'Chevalier' of the 'Ordre National du Merite' in French Honours- List. We are delighted to learn of this award to one of our friends.

HISTORY ON RECORDS No.4. by Leonard Petts

"Gas shell bombardment by The Royal Garrison Artillery near Lille on 9th. October, 1918."

This record was made and issued at the request of the War Savings Committee as part of their campaign to stress the importance of purchasing War Bonds.

'His Master's Voice' was invited to undertake the task of obtaining a recording made right in the firing line at the Front. In this way it was thought the message would be transmitted to the public in a new and novel way.

The record was obtained under extraordinary circumstances. Although the war was drawing towards its close fierce fighting was still going on in France, therefore to ship out from London a recording team with all the heavy equipment required to make a satisfactory out-door recording by the primitive acoustic method then in use, get them up into the Front line in France and then return them safely to London, all merely to produce one single-sided disc, can not have been an easy task or one that was lightly undertaken.

On 8th. October, 1918 William C. Gaisberg and a team of three others left Charing Cross en route for France. They planned to make a recording of the Royal Garrison Artillery heavy gas shell attack on the German lines at Lille, as it transpired, just before the town was entered by the British. On the drive from Boulogne, a good deal of it through desolated countryside only just vacated by the retreating Germans, they were issued with tin helmets and given instruction in the use of gas masks.

A short distance from Lille they reached a row of shattered cottages in one of which the Heavy Siege Battery of the R.G.A. had set up its Head Quarters.

On his return to London Mr. Gaisberg wrote - "In the wrecked kitchen we unpacked our recording machines and made our preparations before getting directly behind a battery of great 4.5-inch guns and 6-inch howitzers, camouflaged until they looked at close quarters like giant insects. Here the machine could well catch the finer sounds of the 'singing', the 'whine' and the 'scream' of the shells and the terrific reports when they left the guns."

A satisfactory recording was obtained and at dusk the equipment was packed away and the return journey to London was begun. The team and their equipment arrived safely home only fifty-two hours from the time of their departure from Charing Cross.

Today, when the full visual and aural impact and horror of front line warfare has been fully impressed upon all the population through the medium of radio, television and the film it is perhaps difficult to realise the effect the record made upon its hearers in those days now nearly fifty years ago.

Perhaps the feelings it aroused at that time can best be conveyed by an extract from a letter by Major C.J.C. Street, M.C. of the Royal Garrison Artillery - it was published in the 'Voice' for December, 1918.

"One can hear the whole process of bombardment in its minutest detail, for it must be remembered that this record was made upon the actual battlefield, and depicts a short period of the ordinary life of a Battery. Following the order to load comes the clang of the hundred-pound shell as it is rammed home into the breach of the big howitzer, then the roar in response to the word 'Fire', and, lastly the whine of the shell as it speeds on its way.

So fine is the recording that when Number Three fires a round with a loose driving-band, one can detect the characteristic note that reveals the fact. By what other method could so vivid a picture be conveyed?

Imagination can picture the scene invisible to the gunners themselves, and viewed only faintly by their Observation Officer, far away in the forward post. For every round heard on the record a shell has burst among the clustered German troops, fleeing in disorder before the British assault. As each shell bursts, a cloud of blinding, choking gas spreads among them, till even their respirators fail to yield them protection, and they fall one by one, never to rise again. It has its terrible side, this record, the terror of a just retribution overtaking the nation that thought to conquer the world by its prowess in the arts of war."

The record concludes with an appeal (presumably added afterwards) spoken in the style of a great Shakesperian oration. A sonorous voice rolls out the message 'Feed the guns and help to win the war.'

It is sad to note that this must have been one of the very last records William Gaisberg was to make for he died less than a month later on 5th. November, 1918.

This disc, together with several others made during the years 1914-1918, bridged the period between the two Great Wars. It was listed for the last time in the H.M.V. catalogue of June 1945, after this it vanished together with so many other records of great historical interest which were so ruthlessly struck from its pages.

The profits from the sale of this record were devoted to 'The King's Fund for the Disabled'.

This article should not close without mention of another H.M.V. disc which by its content as association must be closely allied to the above record.

This disc has the uninspiring title of 'Words of Command for the Six Inch Howitzer Drill set to the tune of "D'ye ken John Peel?" by Major C.J.C. Street, R.G.A. This is the officer quoted above.

I have never seen this disc listed in any general H.M.V. catalogue, however, a leaflet definitely shows that it was placed on sale to the public at a price of 3s.6d. even so sales can hardly have been large and the record must now be very rare. It appears to have been issued c. May-June, 1917 and puts the drill instruction of the Siege Battery into the metre of the popular tune 'D'ye ken John Peel?'. It was issued as an aid to soldiers in committing the drill to memory. The instructions were taken from the official drill, set to music, and sung by Mr. George Baker and Mr. Ernest Pike with piano accompaniment.

THE RECORDS

H.M.V. 09508 (single-sided black label)

Gas Shell Bombardment (actual record taken on the Front Line, near Lille, France on 9th. October, 1918) by the Royal Garrison Artillery. Matrix HO 3479af

For a very short period this recording was issued as a double-sided disc on H.M.V. D378. The reverse side seems to have been a most odd 'mis-match' being entitled 'A Puzzle record - the conundrum (a paradox).

H.M.V. 4-2857 'Words of command for the Six Inch Howitzer Drill set to the tune of "D'ye ken John Peel?" by Major C.J.C. Street R.G.A.' Issued c. May-June, 1917.

* * * * *

WANTED

single-sided Gramophone (H.M.V.) Concert records of Joseph Taylor are wanted by Ernie Bayly. [REDACTED], Southbourne, Bournemouth.

WALTER VAN BRUNT (SCANLAN) by QUENTIN RIGGS

Walter Van Brunt was born in New York in 1892 of Dutch ancestry. When he was only in his mid-teens he decided he wanted to become a singer. He was interested in making records but he was afraid that his extreme youth might prejudice the recording executives against him, so in 1908 he made a private cylinder of "I Wish I Had a Girl" and sent it to the Edison studios. Billy Murray, whom Walter greatly admired, had recorded that song for Victor, and Walter, whose voice bore a remarkable resemblance to Billy's, imitated his idol on the recording.

The executives at the Edison studio were quite impressed by the voice of the 15-year-old who sounded so much like the most popular recording artist of the period, and Billy Murray was himself surprised and puzzled when he heard the record. As a joke, the recording engineers said, "Come in, Billy! We're just listening to a record of yours!" Billy later averred that the voice on the record sounded just like his, even down to the little vocal tricks he sometimes used, but he knew that he had never sung the song on a cylinder. When he learned the truth about the mysterious vocalist he urged the Edison Company to sign up the youngster immediately, which they did.

"The Boy Wonder" then began making records for various other companies as well as Edison, including Victor, Everlasting and Columbia. One of his Everlasting cylinders was the favourite, "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree", which had come out many years before. This was the only recording of this song which included the second verse.

Billy Murray, who sang second tenor in the American (Premier) Quartet, was an ardent baseball fan, and he often played in exhibition games with his favourite team, the New York Yankees. Billy's enthusiasm for the game sometimes caused him to forget a recording date or an engagement for a personal appearance, which annoyed the other members of the Quartet. Eventually they worked out a plan which enabled them to fulfil an engagement when Billy was occupied elsewhere playing baseball or watching a game. Young Walter was asked to stand by and if Billy didn't appear he would sing in his place. If Billy did come, the other three singers of the group would pay Walter something for his trouble. Evidently the 1912 baseball season was a good one because during that year Walter appeared on several American Quartet recordings, including "I Want a Girl Just Like the Girl that Married Dear Old Dad," "There is Silver Now Where Once was Gold" and "Let's Make Love among the Roses". At a reunion many years later, Walter remarked jokingly, "You certainly gave me a lot of work in the old days, Billy!"

In one case, in 1913, Walter appeared on an American Quartet record for another reason. It is not certain, but the most likely theory is that Billy had been to a baseball game and had shouted himself hoarse, so the next day he was unable to sing several high notes which were required in "Beautiful Doll, Goodbye," a sequel to "Oh! You Beautiful Doll." Billy sang part of the song and Walter came in occasionally to take the high notes. Actually it was arranged as a type of dialogue between the man (Billy) and the Beautiful Doll (Walter), and it became one of the best records made by the Quartet. Although five people were singing it, it was listed as by The American Quartet.

The most popular male-female singing team of this period was Ada Jones and Billy Murray. Ada was singing for many companies but Billy still had an exclusive Victor and Edison contract, so other partners were necessary for her for the other companies. The most logical choice was Walter, and he and Ada, who was almost twenty years older than he

was, made many excellent duets. Later Ada sang with Billy Jones, Will C. Robbins, Henry Burr, Sam Ash, George Wilton Ballard, Billy Watkins, and others, but her most successful duets were made with Billy and, later, with Walter.

Thomas Alva Edison's song was "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen" and Walter was Edison's favourite tenor, so all Edison dealers were urged to play Walter's record of that song for all prospective customers. The perfection of this record seemed to be a pet project of "The Old Man", and from time to time over the years he would think of various little changes he would want in it, so Walter would have to sing it over and over to please Edison. Since it was recorded so often and so many times it is likely that, if one possesses more than one copy of this record, they are different 'takes'.

During World War I Walter began singing in musical stage productions and was quite successful in that field. In 1917 while he was rehearsing Victor Herbert's operetta, "Eileen", in which he played the part of an Irishman, Herbert told him: "Van Brunt is a hell of a name for an Irish tenor!" Apparently Walter agreed, changed his name to Scanlan, by which he has been known since.

About 1928, Billy Murray's Victor contract expired and was not renewed. The Victor Talking Machine Company had been sold to another, and in a large-scale economy move it was dropping many of the old, established artists and was replacing them with comparatively unknown singers.

It was at this time that Billy and Walter struck up a partnership and recorded many duets for many companies, including several excellent ones for Edison. Since there was such a similarity in their voices, Billy lowered his voice to contrast with Walter's high, clear, lyric tenor, so many record buyers must have thought that Billy was becoming a baritone! Many of their duets were made under their own names, but they made others as "Saunders and White". They also sang many vocal refrains on dance band records on which their names did not appear.

In 1929 an excellent minstrel record was issued under the name Romeo label and the cast included some very famous names. There was Billy and Walter, Albert Campbell, whose recording career stretched from 1896 to 1930, Jack Kaufman, James Stanley, and others. The first time I heard this record I was astonished to hear Jim Stanley announce: "The silver-voiced tenor, Mr. Walter Van Brunt, will now sing 'Dear Old Girl'". For some unknown reason, and only for this one recording session, Walter had revived the name he had not used for twelve years!

During the 1930's Walter kept busy on the radio alone and with a quartet called the Golden Memory Boys. He also took part in various singing commercials on radio. It was during a recording of a particularly demanding and difficult singing commercial that he strained his voice. The next day his voice was gone, and for many years after that he could barely speak above a whisper. He was forced to discontinue singing and then devoted his time to producing programmes for radio in New York.

A few years later Walter's voice returned, but he never sang again professionally. He retired during the 1950's and, at the age of 75, is now living near one of his daughters in Ohio.

Walter Scanlan was one of the outstanding artists of his day and his voice has given pleasure to countless admirers all over the world for many years.

* * * * *
WANTED. I should be grateful for details of Walter Van Brunt (Scanlan) records issued in England after 1924 on Emerson or any 'small company' labels. Quentin Riggs.

OUR ILLUSTRATIONS

In the centre we find the circuit diagram of the Society playback amplifier as redesigned by Peter Lewis, which has given us very pleasing results since its adoption.

Thank you Peter.

With the courtesy of Sydney Carter, we reproduce the front of a catalogue advertising Edison phonograph's, which is very early, if not the first. Can anyone supply dates or details. PAILLARD & THORENS trade marks are shown for the purpose of identification. You will recall a query in the August, 1966 'Hillandale News' about a "Rebephone" disc machine.

Herr Schenker has kindly supplied photographs which, in each case the first and subsequent trade mark of the two Companies. Originally no ^{show} name was used, but Law later required this to be added. Rebey's, like others throughout the world, bought motors and accessories from Paillard or Thorens and built them into their own cabinets. Or, I suspect, the complete machines, adding only their own stencils. The cross forms part of both trade marks because both factories are situated at Sainte Croix. Thorens continue to manufacture gramophones & accessories, while the Paillard company now makes Bolex cameras and Hermes typewriters.

KLINGSOR. If not originally, Klingsor 'gramophones' were made by the Polyphon Company. Strings were placed across the mouth of the horn, presumably with the intention that they should resonate sympathetically with the music being played. Your Editor and Mr. Bleeker of Amsterdam possess Klingsors with leaded lights of various colours in the front doors. Additionally, both models have an extra section between the turntable and the horn set round with mirrors, in the centre of which is a revolving spindle upon which may be fixed a statuette of dancers. When used with a 'quick-waltz', a pleasing effect is obtained. The whole thing is something of a 'novelty'. Judging by the prices quoted in the 1907 advertisement, it is not surprising that 'Klingsors' are found only infrequently. We are grateful to Mr. Broad for the loan of the 1909 advert. In more humorous moments, your Editor is tempted to call in a piano-tuner to tune his Klingsor!

* * * * *

THUMB NAIL SKETCHES

by TYN PHOIL

No.29 Edison Blue Amberol 4338.

"Arrah go 'long with you" by Marguerite Farrell
(COMEDIENNE)

Miss Farrell's career was an interesting one showing what an ambitious girl can do. When she decided to do stagework, she set about educating her feet. After a course at Ned Wayburn's dancing school, she secured some stage experience with "Rogers Brothers in Ireland", followed by a spell in vaudeville in "Four College Girls". This showed her the need of voice training and after some tuition, approached Oscar Hammerstein who decided to give her a trial. She appeared in twenty-eight shows in one year under his management, and deciding that it was too much of a good thing, tried her hand at comic opera. Engagements with "Miss Princess", "American Maid" followed, and, making friends with Lilian Russell, found herself among the stars. Lew Fields quickly engaged her for his big musical production, "Step this Way", where she made, with her singing and dancing, the hit of the show.

* * * * *

Your Editor regrets the recent tardiness of replies to correspondence during the past month—caused by a very pleasant holiday with Mr. & Mrs. Quentin Riggs in Bonn, followed by a brief visit to Holland where he was received with courteous hospitality by our Members, Messrs Bleeker, Galen Last, Jansen & Keessen.

ST. VALENTINE'S DAY 1967 by Gerry Annand

For the Society meeting on 14th. February, 1967, at very short notice, the Chairman, Mr. George Frow, gave a very instructive and informative double programme. In the first half, he concentrated on the music surrounding the American Civil War 1861-65, and after the interval, a musical survey of the art of Stephen Foster. Every nation has its own way of dealing with a war situation, and it was noticeable how romanticism enveloped the American civil population at that time. All the songs were personal complaints of prisoners of war, and tearful leave-taking from affected homesteads.

A comparison can be drawn by viewing the British attitude to war. Older in sin and sincerity, we disdain the romantic and our first thought is, "Up! Guards and at 'em". Meanwhile a harmonica plays "Tipperary".

Truly an instructive programme.

Stephen Foster had much trouble in his life, some of it of his own making, despite these vicissitudes, a maturing style is evident, and there is a long bridge between "Camptown Races" and "Beautiful Dreamer", with which George finished the programme. Like Gershwin, Stephen Foster has rightly earned his place as an American musician of note, of which the proof is the wide use of his music right to the immediate present.

The programmes were ably supported by relevant recordings, and this was a recital one comes to expect from one of the Officers of this Society.

Thank you, George.

* * * * *

GERALDINE FARRAR (1882 - 1967) MARY GARDEN (1874 - 1967) by Bryan Marchington

The passing of an aged prima-donna makes little stir in the national press and even in the more specialised magazines, where she might be more worthily remembered, there is often scarcely a mention. The early months of 1967 have brought the deaths of two such artists, both of whom were very celebrated and of great news-value when at the height of their careers, but now apparently remembered only by the collector of early records and the operatic historian - at any rate in England.

Apart from living to a good age, the two ladies had certain things in common: in their prime they were both remarkably slim and attractive, and were noted actresses (in fact some would have it that Mary Garden was more actress than singer, but her comparatively few records, imperfect technically though they are, are sufficient to show there was nothing amiss with her vocal equipment); both first achieved success on the continent, and then became the rage of operatic circles in America; they were little known in England, only Garden having sung a few performances in London, which did nothing to contribute greatly to the success of her career; both had periods of study with Trabaldello in Paris, and made their debuts in leading roles - there was no apprenticeship in the chorus or supporting parts; and both starred in silent films, though Farrar had the greater success.

The Scottish-born Mary Garden's outstanding debut mid-way through a performance of "Louise" at the Opera-Comique (1900) is too well-known to need recounting, but the part she played in bringing to success the strange new world of Debussy's "Pelleas et Melisande" both in France and in America, should not be forgotten. She excelled in the "modern" operas of the period, but also in a number of "singer's operas", such as Ophelia in the Thomas "Hamlet". For a year (1921-22) she was director of the Chicago Opera, an unusual post for a singer at the height of her career - and a woman too. She retired

from the operatic stage in Paris in 1934 and returned to her birthplace, Aberdeen, in 1940; after the War she resumed her public appearances with a series of lectures in America.

Compared with the output of Geraldine Farrar, Mary Garden made very few recordings. The early cylinders and discs (some with Debussy at the piano) are extremely rare, and the more common American Columbias and Victors command quite high prices. The collector of modest means has not been well served by the companies responsible for L.P. re-issues - one or two items in mixed recital discs, and one side only of Scala 829, backed with Calvé recordings: one can only assume that a sufficient number of good copies is hard to come by.

Geraldine Farrar, wonderful pupil of the great Lilli Lehmann, had a brilliant early career in Berlin (from 1901), with many continental guest appearances, and then in November 1906 began her long association with the "Met", New York - nearly 500 appearances as Butterfly, Tosca, Carmen, and in many other less-performed works. After her retirement in 1931 she could be heard again introducing, with vocal and piano illustrations, the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts during the 1934-35 season. In addition to her vocal talents, she was an accomplished musician and writer, having a number of arrangements, translations and original works to her credit; and between 1915 and 1920 she appeared in 14 films.

Those who are attracted to one of the most likeable singers are fortunate that she has left us such a fine selection from her repertoire on records - over 180 different recordings known to exist - and it is not difficult to build up a representative collection from the more popular titles. The International Record Collectors' Club of America has done excellent work since the 1930's in making available Farrar's scarcer commercial recordings, and also several broadcasts and private recordings. There exists a very fine issue of "The Record Collector" magazine (Vol. XIII, No's 9/10) devoted to Farrar, with one of the best discographies ever published, chiefly the work of our Member, Mr. W.R. Moran, and indispensable to the Farrar enthusiast.

Garden and Farrar, both of them legends in their lifetime, are dead - but their memories will live on, and the records and writings they have left will go a long way towards helping us to re-create something of the peculiar magic of the operatic scene of half-a-century ago.

A SHATTERING EXPERIENCE by Alan Forrest

In my work in Brussels I meet Musicians' trade union leaders of many lands, and if they come home to dinner, I always play them a cylinder or two. Among the older ones this sometimes brings a tear to their eyes as they remember their earliest musical experiences. However, the reaction of the leader of the American Federation of Musicians who visited us recently was the opposite - a broad smile.

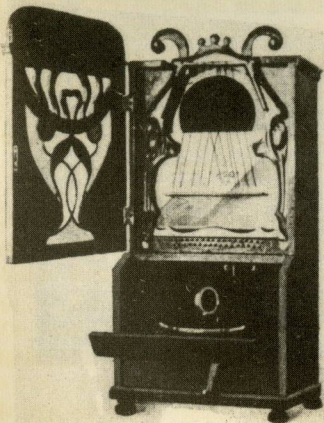
The mention of Edison made him remember his first professional engagement at the age of 16; playing the violin in a shop window alternately with the meditation from Massenet's Thaïs rendered on a thick Edison disc record, to demonstrate that the sound of the latter was as rich as the live performance.

This part of the sell attracted a lady into the shop, but the second stage - demonstrating that the record was unbreakable - was not so successful. The salesman ~~manipulated~~ threw the record to the floor but unfortunately - to the surprise of the lady, the amusement of the musician and the discomfort of the salesman - it hit a nail and shattered into a thousand pieces.

from a 1907 advert

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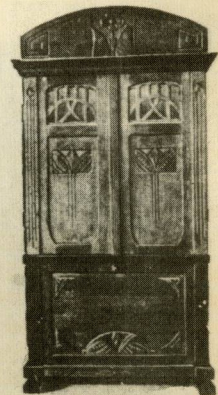
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